

Adam Silver Shop
318 King Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-667

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VA
7-ALEX,
136-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADAM SILVER SHOP

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Location: 318 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished in 1968 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: The building(s) on this site housed the flourishing silver, watch, and clock-making business of the Adam family.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Mid-nineteenth century.

On April 14, 1817, John Adam, son of James Adam, an early Alexandria silversmith, bought, for \$2,500, the property later known as 318 King Street:

Begin on King Street 77 feet 1 inch east of Royal Street;
South parallel to Royal Street to an alley;
East with the alley and parallel to King Street 15 feet 5 inches;
North parallel to Royal Street 100 feet to King Street;
West with King Street 15 feet 5 inches to the beginning.

It is probable that the building, or buildings, on the lot in 1817 were of frame, because early insurance policies covering properties in this block show only one brick building, which disappeared prior to the recent demolitions. The fire of January 18, 1827, spared the buildings fronting on the 300 block of King Street, although it destroyed all buildings in the rear.

John Adam may have erected a brick building on this site some time after the fire of 1827. In any event, he carried on his business as silversmith, watch and clock-maker at this location until his death in 1848.

2. Architect: Unknown

3. Original and subsequent owners: John Adam was the first owner. On May 10, 1849, John Adam's heirs conveyed to William Wallace Adam, his son, for \$2,500, the same property John Adam acquired in 1817. William Wallace Adam probably

erected the building on the site at the time of demolition, or perhaps, renovated and modernized an earlier brick building put up by his father. He, too, stayed at this location, and continued the family business. The will of William Wallace Adam, recorded in 1877, asked that his sons, Charles F. Adam and Robert A. Adam, continue to run the family establishment. That William Wallace Adam did not move his shop is confirmed by a deed of trust executed by his widow on January 7, 1879, which lists, among other property:

That tenement and lot of ground . . . on the south side of King Street between Fairfax and Royal Street, lately occupied by said William Wallace Adam as his store . . .

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

A "local item" in the Alexandria Gazette of March 7, 1853, indicates Adam's shop was well patronized:

Some unknown, and kind friend, or friends, have presented to the Methodist Episcopal Church of this City, an entire set of Communion Service--a very beautiful present, purchased from Mr. William Wallace Adam's establishment in this place.

In 1853, William Wallace Adam built for his home the three-story brick house, with marble trim, still standing at 706 Duke Street.

C. Sources of Information:

Newspapers as cited; Alexandria Deed Books E-2, p. 37; K-3, p. 476; 7, p. 498. Alexandria Will Books 5, p. 79; 1, p. 220.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

Architectural character: The three-story, two-bayed structure is an example of the simple brick commercial building that lined the main business thoroughfare of King Street.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Three stories, two bays.

2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, English bond.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorway and doors: A narrow recessed door is situated to the left of the building. The shop window has been altered but the decorative brackets supporting the projecting denticulated cornice testifies to some aspirations to grandeur.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows now have later one-over-one sash and are defined by simple wooden lintels and sills.
4. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Shed roof with parapet.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Molded brick cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

Two-room plan.

D. Site:

The building faces northward and shares a party wall with the building to the east.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
The Historic Alexandria
Foundation
July 1968
Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
November 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings in downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and the photographs were supplied by George Eisenman. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract for HABS.